

I am seriously concerned about the adequacy of the Veteran Administration's response to the medical needs of 650,000 veterans with chronic mental illness. I am specifically concerned that as a result of (Veteran Health Administration) VHA's decision to rapidly downsize psychiatric hospitals, veterans with mental and substance abuse disorders are not receiving proper treatment and the services that they need and deserve.

In particular, dollars saved by eliminating beds from inpatient psychiatric facilities are not being redirected to serve veterans with mental illness in the community. Between FY 1995 and FY 1997 the number of seriously mentally ill veterans treated at inpatient facilities decreased by nearly 20%. Currently, there is no indication that the twenty-two (Veteran's Integrated Service Networks) VISNs are compensating for the lack of inpatient care with either adequate alternative care settings or community-based services for veterans with mental illness.

Frightening, over two-thirds of VHA outpatient facilities do *not* provide mental health care. Neither do they provide case management services for these veterans. Case management is essential for mentally ill veterans because of a pervasive lack of financial and family support. In addition, many members of this group need continued attention because they suffer from the dual diagnosis of mental illness and substances abuse.

I am deeply concerned that the structural changes within VHA and the lack of community-based services threaten many veterans with homelessness. Sadly, 40% of all homeless males are veterans.

I offered report language that emphasizes the need to reinvest resources in alternative community-based mental health services, including prescription drugs. The current situation of veterans who require treatment for mental illness should be a source of shame and embarrassment, and America should do what is right.

The sad reality is that not everyone is sharing in the economic prosperity of the booming '90's. Instead of being financially able to invest in a home, over 12 million people are paying over 50 percent of their salary on rent. This bill fails to help these families. In fact, the bill will cost northwest Ohio 448 housing units for cash-strapped families next year. This bill also takes major swipes at many of our neediest citizens and their communities, ranging from cutting funding that keeps children safe from lead paint poisoning to denying housing for people with AIDS and for seniors. America should do what is right.

The bill cuts Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) by \$250 million, which would result in a loss of vital community development projects, and the 97,000 new jobs that would be created. Just in Toledo, our city would lose \$3.8 million of current funding. The State of Ohio would forego over \$7.3 million in community development assistance so vital to revitalizing all corners of our State. For the last 6 years, the Majority has been preaching community empowerment, CDBG is the essence of community empower. By giving communities the flexibility to create their priorities to invest CDBG funds, it empowers them to address their community's need as they see fit.

The bill denies the Administration's request for incremental housing vouchers resulting in 128,000 families being denied housing vouchers.

The bill would increase children's exposure to lead paint poisoning by cutting the Lead Hazard Control Grant program.

The bill would slow the fight against housing discrimination by cutting the Fair Housing Assistance and Fair Housing Initiatives Programs. In my community, these funds have given the opportunity for many minority applicants to achieve the American dream of owning a home.

The bill also fails to fund the rehabilitation of almost 28,000 units that would create quality housing for low- and moderate-income renter and owner families.

The bill would result in almost 16,000 homeless people and persons with AIDS being denied essential services because of the cuts in homeless and Housing Assistance for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) programs.

I would like to thank the Chairman and the rest of the Subcommittee Members for their support of report language that I offered that would help the residents of public housing by offering, what most Americans take for granted, which is adequate amount financial services located near where they live. Unfortunately, in our country, financial services are less common and less likely to be located in poor to low-moderate income neighborhoods. HUD, in conjunction with the National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) will study the feasibility of opening credit unions in public housing. With the introduction of credit union in public housing, we can cut down on welfare fraud and encourage financial independence.

The bill cuts NASA by \$1 billion. This cut will harm future space exploration programs, force NASA to slash programs and personnel and cripple our nation's basic scientific development for decades. This bill will drastically hurt our ability to maintain the balance of trade advantage in the first "A" in NASA—Aeronautics. This budget inhibits our ability to advance future developments of technology that will allow America to compete in the aeronautics industry in the 21st Century. We must do what is right.

In conclusion, I am here today to urge my colleagues to do better for America, for the men and women veterans to whom our nation owes a great debt, for the families in desperate need for housing throughout this Nation, and protect basic research for the benefit of all Americans as we enter the 21st century.

IN RECOGNITION OF ART IBLETO

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize my good friend, Art Ibleto, who is being honored this month by the Order Sons of Italy in America-Grand Lodge of California for his lifetime of achievements.

Mr. Ibleto served as President of the Grand Lodge of California from 1995-1997 and will receive the accolades of friends and family at

the Lodge's 74th Anniversary on September 18, 1999.

Mr. Ibleto's accomplishments are many. As a young man during WW II in Italy, he joined the underground to fight against Nazi Germany and the Fascists. His specialty was demolition—planting explosives under bridges and railroads and in highway tunnels to hinder the German advance.

Following the war, Mr. Ibleto immigrated to the United States and eventually settled in Sonoma County where he worked in the fields picking vegetables and as a mechanic, truck driver and factory worker.

He married his wife, Vicki Ghiradelli Ibleto, in 1951 and they bought their first home and acreage in 1961. Art and Vicki raised hogs and cows and harvested potatoes before moving on to the more lucrative ventures of growing Christmas trees and building and renting duplexes.

Art and Vicki became members of the Sons of Italy, Pentaluma Lodge 1518 in 1958. He served in various offices of his local lodge, including two terms as President. He also served as Grand Deputy to the Santa Rosa Lodge for many years, National State Delegate for 24 years, State Vice President for four years, and eventually attained the office of State President in 1995. In his leadership roles at the local, state, and national levels, Art has diligently promoted Italian culture, language and cuisine.

In 1974 Art started the Spaghetti Palace at the Sonoma County Fair as a United Lodges, Sons of Italy project. In a very short time, the Spaghetti Palace became the number one vendor at the county fair, a distinction it has sustained through the 1999 season.

As a result of the success of the Spaghetti Palace, Art took on a new career of supplying local stores with his own line of Italian cuisine and catering special events. He is known throughout California for his savory dishes and has earned the title of the "Pasta King."

Art is now the new owner of a vineyard and soon will be shipping wine under the Ibleto Winery label.

Mr. Speaker, because of Art Ibleto's commitment to his native country and to the Italian American people in the United States, it is fitting and proper to honor him today for his many accomplishments and contributions.

A TRIBUTE TO ROBERT P. MIELE

HON. GRACE F. NAPOLITANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mrs. NAPOLITANO. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate Robert P. Miele on his retirement after 34 years of distinguished service to the people of Los Angeles County, California through his work at the County Sanitation Districts.

Over the course of his long career at the Sanitation Districts, Bob Miele has worked diligently to protect the health and safety of Los Angeles County's residents by helping to build the Districts into one of the largest, most efficient and technologically advanced wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal systems in the world.

Bob began his career at the Sanitation Districts in 1965 as a Project Engineer, after completing his Master of Science degree in Sanitary Engineering at Pennsylvania State University. He rose steadily through the ranks to become the Head of the Research Section of the Technical Services Department, the Assistant and finally the Head of the Technical Services Department, a position he has held for the past twenty years.

As Head of the Technical Services Department, he has overseen the day-to-day operations of a truly impressive organization. The Sanitation Districts serve five million people and nine thousand industries in Los Angeles County. In addition to providing advanced wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal, the Districts also perform effluent and water quality monitoring, laboratory support, scientific research, and importantly in Southern California's dry climate, reclamation of millions of gallons per day of water that can be reused to keep Los Angeles County green and replenish its vital aquifers. Bob Miele's leadership has been important in ensuring the great successes of these operations.

Bob is also deserving of highest commendations for the many outstanding contributions he has made to state and national organizations concerned with water quality and sanitation. Throughout his illustrious career he has served as a member, a chairman, and a founder of numerous organizations including: The California Association of Sanitation Agencies, the Southern California Coastal Water Research Project, the Waste Reuse Association of California, the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies, and others.

As a former Director of the Southeast Los Angeles County Sanitation District, I am very pleased to offer this tribute to Robert P. Miele for his outstanding record of exemplary service to he Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts and to extend sincere best wishes to him in his retirement.

CONGRATULATIONS J.W. "SKIP"
TINNEN UPON HIS RETIREMENT

HON. PAT DANNER

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Mr. DANNER. Mr. Speaker, my good friend and constituent, J.W. "Skip" Tinnen will soon be retiring from the board of directors of Saint Luke's Northland Hospital and I want to express my best wishes to him on this occasion.

Skip was first elected to the board of directors of the Spelman Memorial Hospital (which later became Saint Luke's Northland Hospital in 1978.) He served as an active member of the board until January 1999, when he was elected to Emeritus status, and he continues to serve in this capacity. He is the first member of the board of Saint Luke's Northland or Spelman Memorial Hospital to serve in this role.

Skip has actively served on many committees of the hospital board including Finance Committee; Long Range Planning Committee, Joint Conference Committee, Public Relations & Personnel Committee and Strategic Plan-

ning Committee. During the years 1994 and 1995 he had a perfect attendance at hospital board meetings. He has been very active in the expansion of the hospital facility. Also, he has been an active supporter of the philanthropic efforts of the hospital which include the golf classic and serving as vice president of the Spelman Medical Foundation.

Not only has Skip served the local health care community, he is also active in many civic and community organizations. He is the owner of the Plattsburg Leader newspaper and is very active with the Northwest Missouri Press Association.

Skip Tinnen's contributions to Saint Luke's Northland Hospital, the community, the sixth Congressional District of Missouri and our Nation should not go unnoticed. For all his many efforts on behalf of that which is good in our country, I want to say "Thank you, Skip, job well done."

INTRODUCTION OF THE UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION ACT OF 1999

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, September 14, 1999

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, today, I rise to introduce the Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Early Childhood Education Act of 1999 (Universal Pre-K), a bill to begin the process of introducing universal pre-kindergarten into the nation's public schools by adding an additional grade in elementary school as an option for every 4-year-old child, and in some cases under 4, regardless of income. I seek to include my bill in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which is scheduled to be reauthorized during this Congress. The authorization task will be to reshape the federal government's role to fit the challenges of the next century, which parents and school systems are already experiencing. In particular, the new science on brain development, decades of successful experience with high quality Head Start programs, and definitive data from an array of the best experts all indicate that the expansion of universal pre-kindergarten is the next frontier in education.

The bill I introduce today adds a section to Title X, Part I of ESEA, entitled the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, aimed at using schoolhouses as centers of neighborhoods. Under this new program, any school district in the United States may apply to the Department of Education to fund pre-kindergarten educational classrooms. Grants funded under this § 10905 of the ESEA totaled nearly \$100 million during fiscal year 1999, at an average of \$375,000 per three year grant. Universal Pre-K grants will seek to rapidly encourage school systems to permanently add pre-kindergarten classrooms to the elementary school grades and to their own school budgets, using the experience they acquire from the federally funded program. The bill will allow school districts throughout the United States to systematically begin organized 4-year-old classes to demonstrate how children

respond to earlier child education. Districts will craft models for capitalizing on the elusive window for early brain development, and the pre-kindergartens will provide an alternative for desperate parents who today are left to daycare with little, if any, educational component, or to the homes of people with no background in child development. Because the programs must be in regular school buildings with teachers equivalent to those who teach in other grades, widespread problems with unqualified aids, non-compliant building codes or inadequate facilities will be eliminated automatically. The program in this bill would not displace existing daycare programs as an option. Its purpose is to encourage local school budgets based on demonstrated experience provided by grants under this bill.

The new science shows that brain development determining lifelong learning begins much earlier in infants and children than was previously believed. The bipartisan Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues held hearings during the 105th Congress, which were among the first hearings to explore brain development in children from birth to age 3. Experts testified to new scientific evidence concerning the critical need for early brain stimulation beginning in infancy to assure that the child develops the necessary cognitive, linguistic, emotional and motor skills. During the early years, a child's brain begins to develop the neural connections that lay the foundation for the rest of life. According to experts, the longer the brain grows without sufficient stimulation during these critical first years, the less likely the child is to develop fully the neural connections needed for a wide variety of higher brain functions later in life. To lose the irreplaceable years at the beginning of a child's life when the brain is forming is to miss periods of development that cannot be retrieved.

Early childhood education is not new, of course, but beginning education in the very first years has just begun to be deeply explored. As early as 1647, Massachusetts required that children as young as three years of age learn to read the Bible. German immigrants brought kindergarten, designed to be a "play garden," to the United States in the mid-nineteenth century and often included children younger than 5 years of age. As early childhood education spread in this country in the latter part of that century, states such as Vermont and Connecticut incorporated kindergarten into the public school system. For the most part, however, the kindergartens of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were supported by philanthropists as a way to free low-income mothers to work and to provide education as a way out of poverty. Today kindergarten is a universal option in the United States.

More recently, we have seen great success in many early education programs, including many Head Start programs, which target low-income children beginning at age three through third grade. The success of high quality Head Start and other pre-kindergarten programs combined with the new scientific evidence concerning the importance of brain development in the early years should compel the expansion of early childhood education to all of our children. Traditionally, early learning